Department of Chemistry policy on TA duties
Approved by Department Head, Director of Graduate Studies,
Budget & Operations Committee, and Advisory Committee, March 21, 2019

Graduate students in the Department of Chemistry are generally appointed as TA for one or more semesters during their graduate studies. Our graduate students have research obligations and often their own coursework in addition to their TA duties. The following points describe the duties expected of each TA and instructor (professor or lecturer). If any TA has a problem or complaint regarding their TA duties, then they should contact the Director of Graduate Studies. All complaints will be held in confidence unless and until the TA explicitly indicates otherwise. The department head will meet with any instructor found not to comply with this policy, to discuss how to address and resolve the issue.

(1) The standard TA appointment is 0.5 FTE, equivalent to 20 hours per week. For such an appointment, all TA duties combined should on average not exceed 20 hours per week. On rare occasions (e.g., exam grading), extra time may be required. Instructors should notify their TAs of such rare occasions well in advance. These rare occasions should never place an unreasonable burden on a TA and should not allow the average duties over the semester to exceed 20 hours per week.

(2) TA duties include tasks such as, but not limited to, holding office hours, leading discussion sections, preparing and grading problem sets and quizzes, proctoring exams, assisting the instructor with grading exams, monitoring lab sections, and grading lab reports. A TA may be required to attend course lectures at the discretion of the instructor. In general, a TA should handle duties that are important for the course but that the faculty instructor cannot handle directly due to student numbers. TA duties and any syllabus changes should be made known to the TAs well in advance rather than on short notice.

(3) The instructor has primary responsibility for preparing all exams and exam keys. A TA may be asked to contribute but should never have primary responsibility.

(4) In some circumstances, a TA may lecture in place of the instructor. This should be done primarily for the education and career benefit of the TA rather than the convenience of the instructor. The great majority of the lectures in a semester should be presented by the instructor or a substitute faculty colleague.

(5) Whenever possible, instructors should design course materials (including exams and problem sets) to take into account the burden on TAs, such as grading time.